THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir. Training programmes are conducted as an ongoing continuous process to improve work culture and quality of services.

(b) and (c) 41 women participated in the Refresher Training programme organized at IGI airport on 10-05-2001 to develop communication skills amongst Senior Airport Hostesses and Telephone Operators. As a result, the announcements at the airport have improved. Also, 20 police personnel participated in the Training on Screening of X-Ray Baggage System organized at IGI Airport from 16-10-2000 to 19-10-2000. The Police staff have been exposed to the usage of X-Ray Baggage System.

(d) Yes, Sir. the programmes on Building Positive Work culture and Customer Care is proposed to be conducted at 26 airports in the country, namely at Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Trivandrum, Ahmedabad, Goa, Calicut, Guwahati, Pune, Jaipur, Coimbatore, Varanasi, Nagpur, Vadodara, Mangalore, Lucknow, Patna, Udaipur, Indore, Bhubaneswar, Imphal, Aurangabad and Amritsar.

Conversion of Biju Patnaik Airport into an International Airport

934. DR. M.N. DAS: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether any proposal is under Government's consideration to transform the Biju Patnaik Airport in Bhubaneswar into an International Airport;

(b) if so, whether any steps have been taken in that direction; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) to (c) Airports Authority of India (AAI) has constructed a new terminal building with all modern passenger facilities to cater to 500 passengers at a time at an estimated cost of Rs. 17.77 Crores. Airport is suitable to handle limited international flights with AB-320 class of aircraft. AAI has taken, up work for extension of runway to 9000' to make it suitable for wide bodied jet aircraft operation at a cost of Rs. 12.62 crores.

The work is held up due to non closure of road passing through the area of proposed extension.

Losses to airlines due to increase in Fuel Cost

935. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the latest increase in the fuel prices has appreciably increased the running cost of Indian Airlines;

(b) whether this increase in fuel cost has resulted in losses to the airlines; and

(c) if so, what steps are being taken by Government' to remove these losses and to improve the financial health of the Indian Airlines?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. the Revenue and Expenditure Budget of the Company for the year 2000-01 prepared and approved in December, 1999, projected a net profit of Rs. 28.75 crores, assuming to material change in capacity, input prices and fares.

Subsequent to the approval of the Budget in December, 1999, there was steep rise in Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) price by 18.4% effective 23rd March, 2000 followed by increase of 25% effective 30th September, 2000. The increase in ATF price put additional burden of over Rs. 225 crores per annum on the Company. This coupled with other increases in input costs such as Landing and Navigational charges. Sales Tax on ATF, Security expenditure, Insurance premium, Rate of foreign exchange etc. escalated the cost of operation by over Rs. 300 crore for 2000-01.

Despite these increases in cost, the Company had been able to contain the loss at a figure of Rs. 177.25 crores as per the Revised Budget Estimates for 2000-01.

(c) The following steps have been taken to contain these losses and to improve the financial health of Indian Airlines.

(i) The ATF prices in India have been deregulated by the Government from April, 2001. This has brought reduction in ATF rates and consequently, savings are expected in the ATF cost.